

Establishing community collaborations in Marion County: Benefits and challenges

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The co-presenters direct an innovative experiential learning experience for law and social work students in which they provide legal and social services for low-income Marion county residents. Students are exposed to a variety of situations in which they interact with residents in our community. As the class examines these experiences, a few questions emerge – what is our community? How do we define community? What does our involvement consist of, and why? What limitations exist for us interacting with our community? The session poster will explore collected data over the two semesters this new clinic has been offered. Data presented will include who is in our community, how do we determine who is in our community, and why are some excluded? How do class, power, agency affiliation and court contact/interaction affect who makes up our community? What are the values that underlie decisions we make to engage with some community organizations or courts over others? How then do we resolve conflicts with courts and partner agencies when differences arise over the best options for our clients and/or our students? What decision making goes into picking a reliable community partner? The research will be presented in a way to spark interdisciplinary conversations with session attendees.